

Being in London, in 1849, I was requested by a Statesman to give him some of my opinions on the state of the Canadas. Whereupon I committed to writing the following "Observations," and delivered them to him in manuscript.

Soon after, it occurred to me to have them printed for private circulation, and accordingly I had three hundred copies struck off.

Now, in November 1855, I am again in London, and because of the many angry articles in the Newspapers on our present relations with the United States of America, I print, for private circulation, three hundred copies more.

And, by way of appendix, I add a copy of a Letter which I addressed to the Editor of the London Spectator, in February, 1848.

J. F. G.

WINDSOR:

PRINTED BY W. WHITTINGTON, SHEET STREET,

1855.

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PRINTED BY N. WHITTINGTON, SHEET STREET.
1855.

A
FEW OBSERVATIONS
ON
CANADA,
AND THE OTHER PROVINCES
OF
BRITISH NORTH AMERICA.

LONDON:
JOHN OLLIVIER, 59, PALL MALL.
1849.

THE OBSERVATIONS

CANADA

AND THE OTHER PROVINCES

BRITISH NORTH AMERICA

LONDON

JOHN CUNNINGHAM, 25, MARK LANE

MEMORANDUM of Opinions entertained and expressed on Canadian Affairs, in the year 1838, by an Officer long resident in Canada, and which he transmitted from Toronto, in writing, to the Lords of the Admiralty, and to three eminent Statesmen in England, in June of that year.

Do not unite the two Canadas under one Legislature, as you will thereby punish the Loyalists in Upper Canada for the misdeeds of the disaffected in Lower Canada. I am convinced that, if so united, those of French descent in Lower Canada will unite with the present opposition in Upper Canada and rule their adversaries with vindictive harshness.

The House of Assembly in Lower Canada voluntarily and contumaciously abdicated its functions and its privileges. Let that Province be, in consequence, governed by a Governor and Council, for five, or ten years, or until it appears that a representative Government can again be prudently restored to it. This Governor and Council can, no doubt, govern that Province better than it has yet been governed; and thus a practical proof may be given of the superiority of such government for a Province while yet too immature for self-government. Leave Upper Canada to itself. Cherish it and it will become daily more and more an efficient bulwark against aggression.

If, however, union be decided upon, let it be the union of all the Provinces, whereby the British race will be so predominant as to leave no hope to the other race of acquiring or gaining any ascendancy; and, consequently, no proceedings to that effect will be seriously thought of by that race.

In making this statement I have no idea of treating the Canadians of French descent, after such union, as not fully

entitled to equal privileges and advantages of every description as their other fellow-subjects in Lower Canada. From my long acquaintance with their social virtues and amiable qualities I respect and love them.

Let the union of all the Provinces be Federal, or other, as the Imperial Parliament may decide.

The United States have but four ports or harbours peculiarly eligible for naval purposes; namely, Boston, New York, the Chesapeake, and Pensacola. With such a sea-board and without a numerous sea-going people, the United States cannot become a great naval power. Their commercial marine employs about 100,000 seamen, 10,000, only, of whom are native Americans. But add to them the Bay of Fundy with the harbours therein; Halifax, the noblest naval station in America; the Islands in the Gulf and in the River St. Laurence, and the shores of that river on the south side up to Quebec, then down the north shore to Labrador: the island of Newfoundland with the fisheries in the neighbouring seas and on their extensive coasts; the boundless coal-fields of New Brunswick and Cape Breton, with the inexhaustible forests of timber in all the Provinces, and at one blow you quadruple the naval means of the United States, and by the same blow you cut off the right arm of England's naval power.

Let it be further considered that the canals now in course of construction, will lead to the building of ships upon the lakes in Upper Canada, the hulls of which may be floated down to Quebec, and be there rigged and equipped for sea, and may then be loaded with provisions for the use of the navy, or for other home consumption, whereby a saving of public money might be made. The time will come when all the ships wanted by England, either for commerce or war, may hereafter be built on these lakes and floated down to the ocean. And if the canals now in the course of construction be not large enough, they may be increased in size to any required extent, and the vast future increase of trade will

pay for all such increase; for the waters of the St. Laurence never rise more than three feet above their lowest level, the lakes above neutralizing or regulating such rise by their vast surfaces; the increase of the canals may therefore be made at the least possible cost. The Mississippi can never be canaled at all, because its waters sometimes rise sixty feet above its lowest level, having no lake to check or regulate its periodical overflowings.

Therefore "Let not these Provinces be lost or given away."

Thus far I wrote to England in 1838: To which I add, now in July, 1849, the following statement of facts and opinions.

In the summer of 1848, this last summer, the hulls of two American steam boats, built at Sackett's Harbour, on Lake Ontario, and intended for service on the Pacific Ocean, were floated down the St. Laurence to Montreal. During a few days stay at that city, their officers had dinners given to them by the officers of the garrison and by the citizens. Thus was achieved, in part, what, in 1838, I had stated to the Lords of the Admiralty would, I had no doubt, be accomplished at no distant day. And only a few days ago I read in a newspaper in London, an account of two more steam vessels being floated down this present summer.

Let the British Government and people consider what might not improbably follow the possession of all those advantages to the American people. With Russia in possession of the Baltic and the Black Sea on one side, and all North America in possession of the people of the United States on the other, and both allied for the purpose of driving Great Britain from the ocean, how long could England supply herself with timber, hemp, and all the other materials required for sustaining her ships of war and her mercantile marine?

Let it not be forgotten that such a coalition between that Despotism and that Republic, has once already been contemplated :—namely, in 1812.

Need I again repeat the memorable words of His late Majesty, William the Fourth, "Let not these Provinces be lost or given away."

As to the military power of the United States the time is, I consider, far distant when it can become formidable, *beyond their own frontiers*, to any country well defended. Their people are too comfortable to go for soldiers, and to submit to military discipline and be shot at for a soldier's pay. Hence their chief difficulty in raising a numerous army; and their militia have hitherto refused to serve beyond their own frontier. The armies of the United States must, for ages to come, be chiefly made up of heterogenous masses of foreigners. When in Congress, in 1812, the question of declaring war against Great Britain was debated, Mr. Pickering of Massachusetts asked how the United States could injure England? General Porter said he could take Upper Canada with a corporal and six men to carry a flag; believing that the majority of its inhabitants were ready to join the United States. Such was then the general belief in those States, and such it was, also, in 1837. Yet when the days of trial came, the majority promptly gave the lie to General Porter and his confident and credulous countrymen. Yet now, again, is the same belief more loudly proclaimed than ever. And now again do I confidently declare my unwavering belief that the majority of the people of Canada will as promptly as ever belie that slander, if they be not now unjustly or unkindly treated by the Imperial Government in the present anomalous crisis. Other members of Congress said, let us invade the Canadas with 50,000 men at Amherstburg, 50,000 men at Niagara, and 50,000 at Montreal! I was then in Canada

and well knew, as I then said to my friends, that the United States Government could not raise 50,000 ; and in point of fact their whole regular army, during that war, never amounted, at any one time, to 25,000. Their armies invaded Upper and Lower Canada in the consecutive summers of 1812, 13, and 14, and at the close of each campaign they did not possess an inch of either Province. While our army captured their chief fortress, Fort Niagara, at the end of the second campaign, and kept it until peace was concluded, in February 1815, when it was restored.

As to the American armies I do not hesitate to characterize them as very refractory, not even excepting their officers. And the more numerous they be, the more unmanageable, I am confident, they must become. Many proofs of insubordination were given in evidence before the Court Martial which tried and condemned General Hull for his surrender of Fort Detroit to General Brock, in 1812. One instance of this I give from those proceedings, as published in the United States.

While General Hull's army were marching through the forest, on their route to Detroit, in July 1812, they halted one day, as usual, about three o'clock. Soon after the General's tent was pitched, he heard an unusual noise in the camp, and sent one of his Aides-de-Camp to inquire the cause and report it to him. This officer soon returned and said, "It is nothing, General, only a company of the Ohio Volunteers riding their Captain upon a rail!"—a species of indignity tantamount to tarring and feathering.

This fact, with other similar ones, the General brought before the Court to shew how little he could expect to achieve with an army so constituted as that was which he commanded.

Two other facts, to the same effect, I now give here, from information received by me from two American officers while in conversation with them in Canada.

On my arrival at Fort George, Niagara, with a detachment under my command from Kingston, in January, 1813, I found there a captain of the American army, lately taken prisoner

on that frontier. Having once been myself a prisoner of war in France, in 1799, I felt a consequent sympathy for this officer, and therefore called upon him. I repeated my visits daily for some time, and our acquaintance became rather an intimate one. One day he said, "I left my native state, in the south, some three months ago, to make war upon you, British, in this province. I then entertained very unfavourable opinions of British officers. I believed them to be a proud, haughty, tyrannical class of men. In a few days after joining our army at Buffalo, I was sent in command of the advanced detachment to attack your batteries, and succeeded in capturing one of them. But General Smyth not having promptly supported me, I and my detachment were taken prisoners."

"Soon after my arrival in this fort, the officers of the regiment here invited me to become an honorary member of their mess, and I accepted the invitation. But instead of their being proud and haughty, I find them frank and kind, and very attentive to me. I look through my windows over your barrack square, and I see that those officers treat their men with more condescension and kindness than we can treat ours. Were we to deal with our men as I see you deal with yours, we should lose all authority over them. We feel ourselves compelled to keep them at a distance, in short, to rule them with a rod of iron."

The second conversation I had was with Thomas Jefferson Sutherland, the *soi-disant* General commanding the assembled body of sympathizers collected in Detroit, in 1838, to invade Canada. In attempting to reconnoitre our borders, he came over on the ice with his Aide-de-Camp, when his path was crossed by Colonel Prince, of Sandwich, who was driving by in his sleigh. The Colonel shrewdly suspecting what their object must be, pulled up, and jumping out with his rifle, in an instant made them both prisoners, and drove them to Sandwich. They were soon after sent to Toronto, where the General was tried by a Militia Court Martial, of which I was

the Acting Judge Advocate. After the trial, the proceedings of the Court were sent to England for the decision of the Imperial Government, and the prisoner was transferred from the garrison to the district gaol in the city, for safe keeping until further orders.

Entertaining for him a rather different kind of sympathy than he and his myrmidons had lately proclaimed for our Canadian people, I visited him occasionally, and gave him a few volumes to be perused by him on his passage to Van Diemen's Land, whither I doubted not he would soon be transported. Thus I became on somewhat intimate terms with this American also.

One day he addressed me to the following effect:—"By my late proceedings I have acquired a kind of experience which I little expected on joining my sympathizing countrymen, and for which I am likely to pay far too dear a price. I am now convinced that the people of the United States are, as soldiers, very unmanageable, even from the highest to the lowest of them. I one day detached from Detroit my second in command, General Theller, with a schooner full of men, to take possession of Point Pélé Island, below Amherstburg, and there to wait until I should join him with the remainder of our force. On passing Amherstburg, however, he thought it had a very defenceless appearance, and he suddenly decided on attacking it, in the hope of taking the feather out of my cap, as the saying has it, and thereby raising himself at once to eminence. He made the attack, but failed, being with his men and schooner captured by your people. And thus was my then plan entirely frustrated. In short, our people are very unfit materials for soldiers."

Much to this effect has already become public by what has appeared in the newspapers of the recent doings in Mexico; and much more, no doubt, existed, but which may never become public. Neither does the success which attended the American army in Mexico at all change my opinions of the inefficiency of that army. The hope of finding riches in that

country, no doubt, induced many to join that army, and the well known feeble character of the Mexicans gave more confidence and energy to the Americans than they could display before an army of undoubted skill, and well known individual strength and bravery.

From the experience I have had during the late war in Canada, and from all that I have heard and read, I have no doubt but that the present population of the North American provinces, cordially united, and supported by the troops now (1849) in those provinces, would promptly defeat and drive back into their own territory an invading American army of 100,000 men.

Let the Imperial Government now unite those Provinces, and then be just and indulgent to their people, and neither separation by desire of the Provincials, nor conquest by the United States, need be apprehended.

So united, and held by affection to the parent State, as I am fully convinced a vast majority of the Provincials ardently desire to be, their neighbours may invade the Provinces, but assuredly with no better result than attended their armies in 1812, 13, and 14.

To the Editor of "The London Spectator."

Sir,

In your paper of Saturday, under the head of "Important News from Canada," I have read your Comments thereon. Although unwilling to write on politics, I yet cannot refrain from addressing to you some opinions and observations on that Province and its politics.

And I begin by delaring that I have no fear nor apprehension of the North American Provinces ever becoming part and parcel of the United States of America; nor do I believe that for generations to come the people of those Provinces will desire to be separated from Great Britain, if they ever do desire such separation. Neither have I any fear that the party now having the majority in the Canadian Assembly will adopt a single measure with a view to dissever, or even to weaken the connexion with the Parent State. I am personally acquainted with almost all the leaders of that party, and there are among them some of the most loyal men in the Province. But Mr. Papineau is not, I believe, and I am confident will not be one of the persons chosen to form the new Executive Council of the Province. I am of opinion that he will not even take a seat in the Assembly for either of the two constituencies which have returned him, because of some grave differences in the political opinions which he and the present majority severally hold. Neither do I believe, as has been insinuated, that Lord Elgin has hitherto done anything to discourage that majority from placing confidence in his Excellency. Their strength is now great enough to enable them to carry through the Assembly every measure for the good of the Province which they may propose, and I have such confidence in their disposition and their judgment that I do not fear they will offer any other. To this I will add that I am not a supporter of this party, and never have been; and

I would be better pleased if the other party had such a majority as these now have. But as I have no doubt of our connexion with the Parent State being safe in the keeping of either party, I am not displeased with the late change. In one point of view I am rather pleased with it, because I am confident that with the power which the present majority have they will, during the present Parliament, prove that it is not separation they desire, but fair play in working out the true principles of responsible government, which are now much better understood in Canada than they were when the breach was made between Lord Metcalfe and his Executive Council.

Should these my opinions be well founded time will soon show that this party is as loyal as their rivals; and then the British people will cease to look upon us, in Canada, as disloyal, or even discontented; and they will cease to offend or insult us by the continued expression, through the press, of their doubts, their fears, and suspicions of our loyalty. The reality of this loyalty will soon, I am confident, be placed above suspicion; and our affections for our relatives and connexions at home, and our good-will to our fellow subjects at large may be freely and mutually cultivated, although we be separated from each other by the broad Atlantic.

Neither have I many fears, after the long experience of the past, that Colonial Ministers in England will err much hereafter in dealing with us. They can now have no other motive or desire than to advance us in prosperity; which prosperity, however, being now chiefly dependent upon our own care and management, should we fail to secure it, we must blame our own Representatives and not Earl Grey or his successors here in England.

I have resided in Canada, and in every city in it, East and West, for more than forty-five years, and few men have had such good opportunities of knowing its people as I have had; and few can feel a more ardent wish for their prosperity and

happiness than I do; and I look to the future for all the British Provinces with the most cheering and confiding hope.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

JAMES FITZ GIBBON,

Late Colonel of the 1st Regt. of Toronto Militia.

London,

Monday, 21st February, 1848.

THE END.

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Your obedient servant,

JAMES TITM GIBSON

Lieut Colonel of the 1st Regt of Toronto Militia.

London,

Monday, 21st February, 1848.

THE END.